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FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 6238, SENT SECSTATE INFO HONG KONG
PARIS STOCKHOLM VIENTIANE 28 FEB:

QUOTE S E C R E T BANGKOK 6238

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO CINCPAC AND DIA

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TAGS: PBOR, MILI, PINS, CB, LA, TH, VM

SUBJ: SUPREME COMMAND ASSESSMENT OF THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER PROBLEMS

REF: (A) BANGKOK 3886 (B) BANGKOK 5925

SUMMARY: THAI SUPREME COMMAND SEES CURRENT ATTACKS ON THAILAND
DIRECTED FROM CAMBODIA'S NORTHERN BORDER AS INSTIGATED PRIMARILY
BY THAI COMMUNISTS, ABETTED BY CAMBODIANS, BOTH LOYAL AND DIS-
LOYAL TO THE PHNOM PENH REGIME. ON THE WESTERN CAMBODIAN BORDER,
KHMER ROUGE REGULARS ARE SEEN AS INSTIGATORS. DISORGANIZED
CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE FORCES CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONFUSION THE FULL
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LENGTH OF THE BORDER. FIVE CPT TRAINING CAMPS IN CAMBODIA HAVE
BEEN THE FOCUS OF RECENT THAI ATTENTION, ESPECIALLY AS TRAINEES
ARE APPEARING IN CPT TROUBLE SPOTS IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING LENGTHY DISCUSSION FEB 27 WITH SUPREME COMMAND J-2,
SENIOR INTEL OFFICER TOLD US THAT IN SPITE OF FONMINS UPPADIT-
IENG SARY AGREEMENTS IN PHNOM PENH JAN 30-FEB 2 NUMBER AND

SERIOUSNESS OF INCIDENTS ON THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER HAVE CONTINUED ROUGHLY ON A PAR WITH RECENT MONTHS. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THAI COMMUNIST (CPT) AND LOCAL CAMBODIAN INITIATIVES WERE THE USUAL INSTIGATORS OF THE INCIDENTS. FIFTEEN TO TWENTY RATHER SERIOUS INCIDENTS HAVE OCCURRED SINCE FONMIN UPPADIT RETURNED FROM PHNOM PENH FEB 2.

2. TWO MULTIFACETED PATTERNS EMERGE ALONG THE BORDER. ON CAMBODIA'S NORTHERN BORDER, FROM THAILAND'S PRACHINBURI PROVINCE TO UBON PROVINCE, VILLAINS INCLUDE THE CPT, KHMER ROUGE, KHMER SERAI, AND THE AMBIGUOUS "THIRD HAND". ON THE LOWER BORDER, IN CHANTHABURI AND TRAT PROVINCES, THE KHMER ROUGE AND RESISTANCE FORCES SEEM BACK OF THE ATTACKS. ON THE NORTHERN BORDER, MAIN INSTIGATORS OF INCIDENTS ARE CPT, OR SIAM ORGANIZATION, SUPPORTED BY THEIR ALLIES, THE KHMER ROUGE. THESE ALLIES, AS DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL SAIYUT ALSO TOLD US LAST WEEK, APPEAR TO BE TRYING TO ESTABLISH A "LIBERATED ZONE" IN THAILAND, MOST PROBABLY IN THE MOUNTAIN REDOUBT IN LAHAN SAI DISTRICT, BURIRAM PROVINCE. J-2 BELIEVES THAT THE MOTIVES BEHIND THE CAPTURE OF LARGE NUMBERS OF THAI CIVILIANS BY THE TERRORISTS ARE TO CONSCRIPT AND INDOCTRINATE THAIS. HE NOTED WITH GREAT CONCERN THIS MAJOR SHIFT IN TACTICS. THAI INTEL INDICATES THAT CAPTURED THAI CHILDREN ONLY 2 YEARS OLD ARE BEING ABDUCTED FOR LATER INDOCTRINATION. KHMER ROUGE COOPERATING WITH THE CPT APPEAR TO BE COMPRISED OF BOTH TROOPS LOYAL TO PHNOM PENH AND THOSE WHO ARE ALLEGEDLY ATTEMPTING TO BRING DOWN THE REGIME.

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COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN LOYALIST KHMER ROUGE AND PHNOM PENH DO NOT APPEAR GOOD, AND J-2 EXPRESSED DOUBTS THAT PHNOM PENH IS IN FULL CONTROL OF TROOPS IN THE NORTHERN BORDER AREAS. (THIS REPORT CORROBORATED THE EXCELLENT REPORT FROM CONSUL UDORN IN REF B.)

3. ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, FIVE CPT TRAINING CAMPS HAVE BEEN OPERATING IN THE BORDER AREAS IN CAMBODIA: (A) MARCH 8 SCHOOL (COORDINATES: UA039720); (B) SCHOOL 610 (TA876664); (C) SIGNAL AND TRANSPORT UNIT (TA846651); (D) SCHOOL 305 (UA104744); AND (E) OCTOBER 6 SCHOOL (UA054716). J-2 MENTIONED THE DIPLOMATIC DEVICE BANGKOK AND PHNOM PENH HAVE USED TO AVOID CONFRONTATION, I.E., THE REFERENCE TO A "THIRD HAND" (REF A), BUT EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT THE VIETNAMESE, AS IENG SARY SUGGESTED TO UPPADIT, ARE STILL RUNNING THE CPT TRAINING SCHOOLS IN THE TRI-BORDER AREA. HE LEANS TO THE BELIEF THAT KHMER ROUGE ARE THE INSTRUCTORS. SESSIONS APPEAR TO LAST THREE TO SIX MONTHS. J-2 NOTED THAT RECENT GRADUATES HAVE MOVED BACK ACROSS THE THAI BORDER, PARTICULARLY INTO THE LAHAN SAI AREA, BUT ALSO LAST OCTOBER, FOR THE FIRST TIME, INTO CHANTABURI PROVINCE. HE ALSO COMMENTED, WITH GREAT INTEREST, THAT THE KHMER ROUGE APPEARED TO BE TRYING TO PUSH THE CPT UNITS OUT OF CAMBODIA. THIS DEVELOPMENT, J-2 SAID, SEEMS TO COUPLE THE DESIRE TO ESTABLISH A "LIBERATED" AREA IN

THAILAND WITH PHNOM PENH'S EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE THAI-CAMBODIAN
POLITICAL/DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS (THE UPPADIT-IENG SARY MEETING).

4. AS FOR THE ALLEGEDLY DISLOYAL KHMER ROUGE ELEMENTS IN THE
NORTHERN BORDER REGION, J-2 LINKED THESE GROUPS TO THE REGION
AND PROVINCIAL COMMANDERS WHO HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF PURGES SINCE
FEBRUARY 1977. THEIR PERSISTENT GOAL HAS BEEN TO OVERTHROW THE
POL POT REGIME, HE SAID. J-2 INDICATED THAT HE BELIEVES SUCH
DISSIDENTS ARE STILL ACTIVE AND ARE CAUSING SOME OF THE BORDER
INCIDENTS TO EMBARRASS AND CAUSE DIFFICULTIES FOR PHNOM PENH.

5. AS A FINAL ELEMENT OF THE COMPLICATED BORDER SKIRMISHING,
J-2 SAID THAT OVER FIFTEEN GROUPS OF ANTI-CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT
KHMER SERAI OPERATE ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE THAI-CAMBODIAN
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BORDER. IN HIS VIEW, THE GROUPS ARE POORLY COORDINATED, IF AT
ALL, AND INEFFECTIVE. HE ESTIMATED A TOTAL OF 3000 (WHICH EMBASSY
REGARDS AS HIGH AND WOULD ESTIMATE THERE ARE FEWER THAN HALF
THAT NUMBER). J-2 SAID THAT RESISTANCE FORCES, INCLUDING MONKS,
APPROACH THE SUPREME COMMAND FREQUENTLY SEEKING ASSISTANCE, AND
THEN REPORT THESE CONTACTS ERRONEOUSLY AS RTG SUPPORT. IN FACT,
THE THAI MILITARY IS ALREADY TOO STRAPPED FOR FUNDS TO PROVIDE
SUPPORT FOR ITS OWN LOCAL MILITIA, LET ALONE FOR THE RESISTANCE,
PARTICULARLY SINCE THERE IS NO EFFECTIVE, CHARISMATIC CAMBODIAN
IDENTIFIABLE WITHIN THE RESISTANCE. "IF THERE WERE", THE
OFFICIAL SAID, "FUNDS WOULD BE FOUND".

6. UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, J-2 SAID, CONFLICTS ON THE REMAINDER OF
THE BORDER, FROM SOUTH OF ARANYAPRATHET IN CHANTABURI AND TRAT
PROVINCES HAVE BEEN FAR LESS COMPLICATED. UNTIL OCTOBER WHEN FIRST
COORDINATED CTP-KHMER ROUGE ATTACKS WERE NOTED, ATTACKS
ORIGINATED FROM CAMBODIA, LED BY KHMER ROUGE REGULAR TROOPS.
MOTIVES INCLUDE MINOR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, SMUGGLING, REACTION TO
RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES FROM THAILAND, AND A GOOD DEAL OF LOCAL
INITIATIVE. DEGREE OF CONTROL FROM PHNOM PENH IS VARIED. J-2
NOTED THAT AFTER ATTACKS WERE INSTIGATED FEB 7 BY KHMER ROUGE
IN TRAT PROVINCE, THAIS INTERCEPTED A RADIO MESSAGE TO THE
COMMANDER IN KOH KONG PROVINCE FROM HIS SUPERIOR IN KOMPONG SPEU
INSTRUCTING KOH KONG TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AGAINST
THAILAND. LEVEL DID NOT SUBSIDE, AND TWO DAYS LATER, KOMPONG SPEU
ORDERED THE COMMANDER IN KOH KONG TO REPORT TO KOMPONG SPEU.
THAIS DO NOT KNOW WHETHER HE IN FACT REPORTED TO KOMPONG SPEU
BUT SEE THE EPISODE AS EVIDENCE THAT PHNOM PENH WISHES TO LESSEN
THE ACTIVITY AGAINST THAILAND. HOWEVER, CONTROL OF LOCAL COMMANDS
IS UNCERTAIN. ATTACKS IN TRAT CONTINUED AS RECENTLY AS FEB 25.

7. IN CONTRAST, J-2 TOLD US, WHEN SWEDISH AMBASSADOR OBERT PLANNED
TO VISIT CAMBODIA IN DECEMBER, HE ASKED THE THAI MFA FOR PER-
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MISSION TO CROSS THE BORDER FROM THAILAND INTO CAMBODIA AT POIPET. RTG SUGGESTED THAT OBERG FIRST CLEAR THE VISIT THROUGH THE CAMBODIAN AMBASSADOR IN VIENTIANE, SINCE BANGKOK WAS EXCEEDINGLY RELUCTANT TO REMOVE THE BARBED WIRE AT THE BORDER WITHOUT ASSURANCES THAT OBERG WOULD BE RECEIVED AND NOT GUNNED DOWN. OBERG VISITED VIENTIANE, RETURNED TO BANGKOK AND CROSSED THE BORDER, WITHOUT INCIDENT, ALL WITHIN FORTYEIGHT HOURS. THIS RAPID COMMUNICATION CONVINCED THE THAIS THAT PHNOM PENH HAS A FUNCTIONING COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM, AT LEAST TO LARGER TOWNS OR COMMANDS, AND THAT AT LEAST OCCASIONALLY IT WORKS. (EMBASSY COMMENT: IF, AS IT APPEARS, PHNOM PENH IS IN CONTROL IN THE POIPET TO SIEM REAP AREA, IT MAY HELP EXPLAIN WHY AMBASSADOR OBERG WAS ABLE TO SAY THAT HE SAW NO EVIDENCE OF STRIFE DURING HIS BRIEF TRIP TO ANGKOR WAT IN EARLY DECEMBER. PHNOM PENH MAY HAVE ISSUED ORDERS TO INSURE THERE WAS NOT MILITARY ACTIVITY.)

8. PRESS HAS BEGUN TO CRITICIZE THE RTG FOR DEPRECATING BORDER ATTACKS. AFTER THE RTG SENT A "REPORT" TO PHNOM PENH LISTING THAI LOSSES FROM CLASHES SINCE UPPADIT RETURNED FROM PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIANS REPORTEDLY RESPONDED THAT THAIS INITIATED THE ATTACKS. PRESS FOUND THIS PARTICULARLY GALLING. BANGKOK POST FEB 27 SAW THIS AS A "SINISTER TWIST" AND CALLED FOR LESS NAIVETE IN BANGKOK, MORE REALISM AND FIRMNESS.

9. COMMENT: THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY CONFIDED TO US FEB 26 THAT THEY HAVE GONE OUT ON A LIMB AND TOLD CANBERRA THAT PHNOM PENH SIMPLY DOES NOT CONTROL ITS FORCES IN THE BORDER AREAS. WE WOULD BE LESS INCLINED THAN THE AUSTRALIANS OR THE THAI J-2 TO ABSOLVE PHNOM PENH OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ATTACKS AGAINST THAILAND, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT J-2 HAS DESCRIBED THE ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN THE BORDER SKIRMISHING AND THEIR ALLIANCES IN PLAUSIBLE FASHION. WHITE HOUSE UNQUOTE. VANCE

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